

Assemblyman **PAUL KORETZ**

Forty-second Assembly District

proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks



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Koretz Bill Preventing Employers from Locking In Workers Passes the State Assembly

(Sacramento) - Assemblyman Paul Koretz, Chair of the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee, announced that his AB 2545, which seeks to promote safe work environments, passed the Assembly by a vote of 45-28. The bill enhances the penalty on employers for establishing any rule or practice that results in a serious and willful violation of any regulation regarding maintenance and access to exits, that in turn results in the death or serious bodily injury to an employee. Currently, there is no federal law that bans an employer from locking in workers at the job.

"Any policy requiring workers to be trapped at work is an inherent risk to their lives," said Koretz. "Workers should not have to suffer the indignity and danger of being locked in at their job," he said.

Recent news articles have exposed a reported policy used by Wal-Mart and its subsidiary, Sam's Club, throughout the country. As part of this reported policy, employees are locked-in overnight and provided only emergency exits as means of exiting the place of employment. In recent incidents, Sam's Club employees in Texas and Colorado were allegedly injured on the job, only to have medical attention delayed for hours by the lock-in policy. Other workers are claiming to have been locked-in without a manager to release them in an emergency. The workers also say that use of emergency exits for non-emergency uses was strongly discouraged by management. Additionally, Wal-Mart employees in several states have alleged that managers locked the front door and prevented workers, even those who had clocked out, from leaving the job.

"The issue of locked-in workers cannot be ignored," states Assemblywoman Sally Lieber (D-San Jose), a joint author of the bill. "No California worker should be cheated out of mandatory breaks or remain injured, without access to medical care, because they are locked in a store."

"This bill will discourage unscrupulous employers from trapping their employees on the job, especially when they need medical or emergency attention," added Assemblyman Koretz. "These alleged lock-in policies are something out of the 19th century. In this day and age, such draconian and dangerous employment practices are intolerable."

The bill is now headed towards Governor Schwarzenegger's desk for his consideration. "I hope the Governor shares the same views as I do on worker safety and signs this reasonable bill," Koretz said. "California workers deserve the absolute safest possible working environments, and AB 2545 will help achieve that."

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